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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KWBG](#) [PINR](#) [EG](#) [IZ](#) [SU](#) [IR](#) [LE](#) [XF](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN PLANS FOR MARCH 3-4 ARAB LEAGUE FOREIGN
MINISTERS MEETING IN CAIRO

REF: SECSTATE 24372

Classified By: Classified by Acting DCM William R. Stewart
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: MFA Deputy Assistant Minister for Arab Affairs Hani Khallaf says that Egypt will take a cautious approach towards the Palestinian National Unity Government at the upcoming Arab League Foreign Ministers meeting and withhold final judgment until after the NUG is formed. Egypt will attend the March 10 sub-ministerial Neighbors Conference in Baghdad only if Iraq accepts its invitation to a follow-on ministerial in Cairo. Khallaf was non-committal on pressuring Iran on its nuclear program, blaming Israeli "unhelpfulness" for lack of progress on the nuclear issue. Regarding Sudan, Khallaf said that President Bashir was ready to accept a hybrid UN/AU peacekeeping force for Darfur, once outstanding issues of financing and troop commitments are resolved. Khallaf said Egypt would encourage Syria to accept a compromise settlement in Lebanon that does not jeopardize the Hariri Tribunal. End summary.

12. (C) On March 1, 2007, Acting DCM William R. Stewart delivered ref demarche points to MFA Deputy Assistant Minister for Arab Affairs Hani Khallaf. Khallaf said that the Arab League is attempting to keep the March 3-4 meeting as "routine as possible," leaving the specifics -- "and the confrontations" -- for the March 28-29 summit in Riyadh. Khallaf responded to specific points as follows:

(a) Israeli-Palestinian situation

Khallaf said he understood the U.S. position and that Egypt will advocate a cautious approach towards the Palestinian National Unity Government, and stress the need to reserve final judgment until after it is formed.

(b) Iraq

Khallaf said that Egypt is committed, in principle, to attend the March 10 sub-ministerial Neighbors Conference in Baghdad. However, he said that Egypt's formal acceptance depends on Iraq's agreement that it will be a purely preparatory gathering in advance of a follow-on ministerial meeting -- that Iraq will attend -- in Cairo. Khallaf also stressed that Egypt has great concerns about the security situation in Iraq. "I hope we will not have to stay there more than three hours." If Egypt does attend, he will likely lead a small GoE delegation.

(c) Iran

Khallaf said it would be difficult for Egypt to take action under Chapter VII of UNSCR 1737, noting that opposing Iran on the nuclear issue was not possible without "positive" statements from the Israelis. Israel's "unhelpful" comments,

he said, make it difficult for those in the region to take a tough stance against Iran, or to advocate for a Middle East Nuclear Free Zone. He speculated that the GCC might see this issue differently, although "Egypt stands to lose more than anyone" by nuclear escalation in the region.

(d) Sudan

Khallaf said that Sudanese president Bashir is ready to support a hybrid UN/AU peace-keeping operation in Darfur, but only after funding and troop commitment details are ironed out.

(e) Lebanon

According to Khallaf, Egypt will press for Qb League language that will encourage the Syrians and others to seek a compromise political solution that will not compromise the Hariri Tribunal.

¶3. (C) On February 28, poloff delivered ref demarche to a senior Arab League advisor, who had no substantive response but promised to deliver the points to Arab League Secretary General Amre Moussa that evening.

¶4. (SBU) Bio note: Khallaf's father was a university professor in Sulaymaniah, Iraq, during the 1940's, who apparently taught many of the current generation of Iraqi political leaders, including perhaps Adnan Pachachi. End bio note.

¶5. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.
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